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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1685
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1762
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JEDDAH 000094

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2018

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SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA JANUARY 25 AND
FEBRUARY 1: EASTERN PROVINCE, MECCA, AND MEDINA

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Classified By: Consul General Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In the Eastern Province on January 25, the Omar bin Abd al-Aziz Grand Mosque sermon condemned the Israeli "blockade," rebuked Israel, and criticized Arabs and Muslims for not doing enough to aid the Palestinians. On February 1 the Imam spoke against domestic violence. (COMMENT: In the reporting FSN's experience, this was the first time an Imam spoke openly against this topic. END COMMENT.) In the Eastern Province, some Imams performed Qunoot prayers on the situation in Gaza. (NOTE: Qunoot prayers are special supplication prayers an Imam can conduct in times of crisis. END NOTE.)

12. (C) In the Western Province, the January 25 Mecca Grand Mosque sermon focused on the importance of caring appropriately for people with special needs. The following week the Imam criticized Western countries for not speaking out against Israeli "atrocities," called for initiatives to open the border, and urged Muslims to unify against threats that undermine Islam. In Medina, sermons also focused on the Gaza crisis, calling on Muslims and neighboring countries to assist the Palestinians and to resolve the crisis. As with Eastern Province Qunoot prayers, sermons at the Grand Mosques of Mecca and Medina concluded with prayers to assist Gazans, and in most cases, to condemn Israel. END SUMMARY.

Eastern Province

CONDEMNS ECONOMIC "BLOCKADE" IN GAZA; CURSES ISRAEL; DEEMS ARABS AND MUSLIMS IMPOTENT

13. (C) Sheikh Mohammad Saleh al-Munajjid at the Omar bin Abd al-Aziz Grand Mosque on January 25 focused his sermon on Gaza, condemning the economic "blockade" and criticizing Arabs and Muslims for not aiding their Palestinian brethren. He compared the Gaza situation to the hardship early Muslims suffered when the Mecca Quraish tribe imposed an economic blockade on them, particularly the Hashemites and the Abu Talebs, unless they surrendered the Prophet Mohammad to them. He continued, stating that that prompted God's Messenger to send some of his followers to Abyssinia to seek refuge from the resulting economic hardship, etc.

14. (C) The Palestinians, Sheikh Munajjid argued, are being exposed to certain but slow starvation. He stated that due to a lack of appropriate medical care and supplies, more than 3,000 people had left the hospitals and had sought relief elsewhere, in particular Egypt. He described the situation in Gaza as "desperate" and stated that many Palestinian mothers are selling life-sustaining drugs meant for their husbands, in order to obtain money for their families. Blaming Israel for the Palestinians' suffering, he asked God to curse and damn the Jewish state, just as early Muslims did against the Quraish 1400 years ago.

15. (C) Regarding the Arabs and Muslims, Sheikh Munajjid expressed dismay and shock at their lack of reaction to the suffering of the Palestinians. Sheikh Munajjid added that Israel has every right to feel emboldened to do what it pleases. He described Arabs as impotent, weak, and too preoccupied with enjoying the pleasures of life to care about the Palestinians, or anyone else.

WEATHER INDICATIVE OF THE STATE OF THE HUMAN RACE

16. (C) At the Omar bin Abd al-Aziz Grand Mosque on February 1 Sheikh al-Munajjid warned worshippers that the current weather trend is a bad omen and an indication that all is not well with the human race, describing the phenomenon as a taste of what sinners and perpetrators of injustice have waiting for them in the Hereafter. He attributed the root cause of sin to two principal factors: riba and zina -- usury and fornication -- which he explained lead to social injustice, oppression, excessive greed, and vanity. He stated that people not only commit injustice against others, but also against themselves.

SPEAKS OUT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; CALLS FOR PUNISHMENT OF THE JEWS

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17. (C) Condemning acts of violence, particularly those carried out in public places -- rape, terrorism, stealing, fraud, and theft -- Sheikh Munajjid also spoke against domestic violence, which he described as "repulsive." As with the January 25 sermon, he called for the salvation of Gazans and the punishment of the Jewish people.

SUPPLICATION PRAYERS: EASE SUFFERING OF THE PALESTINIANS IN GAZA

18. (C) Some Imams performed Qunoot prayers, for which Government consent is usually required, during January 27 and 28 dawn prayers. The topic was the worsening situation in Gaza. (COMMENT: Although Posts' sources have not observed the conduct of Qunoot prayers in Riyadh or the Western Province, sermons at the Grand Mosques of Mecca and Medina included concluding prayers on the same issue. END COMMENT.)

Mecca

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS DESERVE AS MUCH CARE AS "THE HEALTHY"

19. (U) Sheikh Salih Bin-Abdallah Bin-Humayd on January 25 at the Grand Mosque in Mecca spoke about people with special needs. He said that they contribute to society and deserve to live in a good environment that allows them to develop and to pursue their interests. He added that the "care our religion accords to them is equal to that of the healthful and sound people." He concluded with a prayer "to help our brothers in Palestine and Gaza," "lift the siege imposed on them and alleviate their suffering."

CALLS FOR ISLAMIC WORLD TO UNIFY AGAINST THOSE WHO UNDERMINE

ISLAM

¶10. (U) On February 1 in Mecca Sheikh Abd-al-Rahman al-Sudays began his sermon by stating that advanced nations are those "that learn lessons from past events." He stressed the importance of unity, explaining that "Since the Islamic world is targeted in its religion, it should achieve unity, especially since there are conflicting groups and warring parties that laid the foundations of fanaticism and ethnic discrimination." He said that those groups and parties have "enabled enemies to harm Islam, undermine its universal and humanitarian nature, accuse it of being unable to develop nations and societies, and brand it as being the source of violence and terrorism." He ended his sermon with a prayer to end the "ordeal" of the Palestinians and for Muslims to extend aid to them.

CALLS TO REBUKE ISRAEL; WARNS OF HUMAN CATASTROPHE IN GAZA

¶11. (U) Sheikh Al-Sudais also cautioned Muslims worldwide that Palestinians in Gaza were facing a human catastrophe. Al-Sudais rebuked Western countries that speak on protecting human rights, freedom and democratic values for not criticizing continuing Israeli "atrocities" in the Palestinian territories. He called for quick delivery of relief supplies and asked Muslims to make donations. He condemned the "brutal Israeli blockade" and called for initiatives to open the border.

Medina

CHASTISES "ZIONIST VIOLATIONS," CALLS FOR AID OF PALESTINIANS

¶12. (U) At the Grand Mosque in Medina Sheikh Husayn Al Al-Shaykh on January 25 spoke on the situation in Gaza, stating that "These tragedies highlight to the whole world the Zionist violations, the policy of criminal attacks, and the terrorist practices." He argued that these practices "conflict with the divine laws, the international norms, and human rights" and stated "Regrettably, all this is taking place with an international silence over this outrageous tragedy."

¶13. (U) Sheikh Al-Shaykh continued with a call on Muslims to

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"support their brothers in Palestine and extend material and moral aid to them." He also urged neighboring governments to "take action to open the closed crossings and the fortified borders to save an entire people before it is too late." He then thanked Saudi King Abdallah for sending aid to the Palestinian people. As with the sermons in Mecca, he ended with a prayer to "grant victory to our brothers in Palestine, alleviate their suffering, and save their blood."

DAY, NIGHT, AND SEASONS ARE SIGNS OF GOD'S GREATNESS

¶14. (U) At the Grand Mosque in Medina Sheikh Dr. Abd-al-Bari al-Thubayti focused his February 1 sermon on how the succession of day and night as well as the four seasons are signs of God's "greatness." He then quoted the following verse from the Koran: "He created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions): He makes the Night overlap the Day, and the Day overlap the Night: He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law): Each one follows a course for a time appointed. Sheikh al-Thubayti concluded with a prayer to "support and save our brothers in Palestine."

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